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ABSTRACT

Many changes have occurred in techniques used to appraise student achievement in social studies, and these new approaches may put teachers in a better position to notice the progress of individual students and then plan for sequential learning. Some of the deficiencies of traditionally used standardized tests have been overcome through the use of criterion-referenced tests, which ensure better fit with a set of standards and better test validity. Weaknesses in criterion-referenced tests may be overcome with newer approaches. Among these are journal writing by students, student diaries, and student logs, techniques particularly appropriate for social studies. Pupil ownership and empowerment are enhanced when students are actively involved in developing portfolios for social studies classes. Portfolio development emphasizes contextual skills and knowledge developed by students, rather than results from externally developed tests. Professional development portfolios are equally useful for teachers. Any approach to assessment should determine what students have learned and what remains to be learned. Appraisal procedures need to be "user friendly" so that plans may be made from the appraisal for improved teaching and learning. (Contains eight references.) (SLD)

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Appraising Learner Progress in the Social Studies

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APPRAISING LEARNER PROGRESS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Many changes have occurred in techniques used to appraise pupil achievement in social studies. Teachers, supervisors, and principals need to stay abreast of new procedures. Why? With the use of diverse approaches, the teacher may be in a better position to notice progress of individual pupils and then plan for sequential learning in the social studies. Diagnosis and remediation involve evaluation and the results should be used to assist each pupil to attain more optimally.

A more traditional approach in the appraisal process has been to use standardized achievement texts. These are norm referenced tests and provide results which spread pupils out on a continuum, from high to low. In a classroom, pupils results from taking a norm referenced test may range from the first to the ninety-nineth percentile. Comparisons among pupils and between schools as well as states may then be made of learner achievement.

There are no objectives for teachers to use in teaching when referring to these standardized tests. Objectives, carefully chosen, provide direction and guidance to the teacher in what is to be taught as well as what is to be learned by pupils.

To take care of some of these deficiencies, criterion referenced tests (CRTs) were developed. The CRTs had statements of objectives that aligned with the test items. Learning opportunities were chosen by the teacher to assist pupils to achieve the stated objectives of instruction. The appraisal procedures measured what pupils had learned. Validity of the test items was then in evidence. If adequate pilot studies had been made of the CRT, reliability might also have been determined, be it test/retest, split half, or alternative forms of reliability. However, the purpose of CRTS was not to spread pupils out from high to low in terms of test results, but rather to guide pupils to achieve the objectives of instruction. There are states and schools that still give standardized tests to pupils to measure progress, at selected intervals. CRTS are more common and are given every few years to pupils as they progress through the public school years. Approximately, three/fourths of the states in the United States measure pupil progress in selected grades to report pupil achievement to the lay public. CRTs have several weaknesses. These weaknesses are the following:

1. It is a one shot approach in one or more school years in attempting to show pupil progress as they go through the public school years. It is vital that pupils do extremely well at that time, since the results are reported to the lay public. Parents and the lay public may place much credence upon CRT results to the point that daily work and evaluation of pupil progress is not considered.

2. the CRT may have been written hastily with inadequate or no pilot studies made. In pilot studies of a CRT, weak items may be rewritten or weeded out, as item analysis studies of that CRT indicate.

3. the CRT may not be properly aligned with the stated objectives. Thus, validity goes by the wayside.

4. studies of reliability may not have been made in a pilot study to notice how consistently the test measures.

5. trivia, rather than relevance, may be inherent in the test items written.

Appraisal procedures used should be studied and revised as the need arises. New procedures on evaluating pupil progress also need to be in evidence (Ediger, 1988).

Journal Writing by Pupils

In each unit of study, pupils should have ample opportunities to write in their journals. In social studies lessons and units of study, pupils may write individually or collaboratively. The entries may tell about what was learned in terms of subject matter content. The entries written need to be reviewed to retain for a longer period of time that which had been leaned. Journal entries may also reflect impressions gained by learners. Feelings may become a part of journal writing. How a person feels about the social studies is important to know so that improvements in instruction may be made.

When writing in the journal, a pupil has a chance to practice important skills of written work. The learner may also have vital subject matter to review here, which should make for less forgetting of previous learnings. Reflecting upon what has been learned helps pupils to analyze and synthesize subject matter. Problems and questions may arise leading to further learning in acquiring relevant concepts and generalizations. Reading and writing are connected when journals are written. Pupils then tend to perceive knowledge and skills as being related and not isolated entities. Journals may be shared with peers, teachers, and parents. Comments may then be made positively about content written and skills acquired. Pupils might become more aware, as a result, of needed improvements that should be made. The journal should emphasize pupil ownership in the curriculum. It is the pupil who does the writing and sharing. Pupils are not pawns, but actively involved in learning. Too frequently, pupils feel powerless in the curriculum when much of the work is assigned to them. With journal writing, the pupil is in control of what is written. Empowerment of pupils is important so that they feel ownership and motivated to achieve objectives in the social studies.

There are numerous facets of journal writing which provide a basis for appraisal. These include the following:

1. determining what pupils have learned in terms of content in the social studies.
2. noticing which objectives have been acquired in writing skills.
3. evaluating feelings of pupils toward the social studies, as indicated in journal writing.
4. assessing pupil purpose in journal writing.
5. evaluation attitudes toward writing in the social studies.

Journal writing has become quite important in the social studies. Learners need to be given ample time for writing. What is written down represents the thinking of the pupil. The learner may wish to share ideas written with classmates and with the teacher. If a pupil is not serious in journal writing, the social studies teacher needs to try to get the pupil involved and motivated. Perhaps with a peer, a pupil will become eager to participate in journal writing. Collaborative endeavors in writing should be encouraged. Time on task and motivation are important factors in having pupils become productive writers in the social studies (Ediger,1997, p.176).

Journal writing is evaluated inside the classroom, not by outsiders such as writers of test items for standardized tests and CRTs. The latter two tests have been written by individuals or teams, rather far removed from the local classroom of pupils.

Writing Diary Entries and Logs.

Diary entries are written on a daily basis with each entry corresponding with the date of writing. Thus, the date needs to be written and a pupil or committee may write for that day what was learned in social studies. Salient items need to be recorded, not trivia. It is good procedure to rotate the individuals or committees as to who is recording in diary form what was achieved in the social studies. Perhaps, an individual or team may record for one or two weeks. Then a different pupil or team may record ideas for diary entries for the class. These diary entries may be appraised by others in the classroom in terms of improving the quality of written content. Pupils may also use the diary entries to review what had been acquired in subject matter and skills. Improved retention of content and skills acquired should be an end result. Diagnosis and remediation are two relevant concepts to use to revise the quality of writing.

Logs consist of summarizing the diary entries to develop vital concepts and generalizations. Synthesizing is involved. There may be many diary entries that go into the developing of a log. Summaries and

conclusions are drawn by pupils in completing the log. Analysis might be a part of deriving summary and conclusion statements in that pupils are separating the relevant from the irrelevant to achieve major concepts generalizations. Individual pupils working on the log or a committee may debate and discuss the synthesis after analyization of what should/should not become a part of the log. Higher levels of cognition can definitely become a part of this activity. I have observed pupils in a classroom, when supervising student teachers and cooperating teachers, in the public schools. These learners were truly working hard in debating what should go into a log, using the diary entries. This was a wonderful thinking experience for these pupils.

Portfolios in the Social Studies

Pupil ownership and empowerment may truly come about when they are actively involved in developing portfolios. The portfolio may be an individual project or, in some cases, a collaborative endeavor is involved. I will discuss the portfolio appraisal whereby the pupil individually with teacher guidance develops his/her own. The portfolio is a purposeful collection of representative work of pupils covering a clearly defined interval of time, such as a month or two months. There is a purpose or reason for developing a portfolio. What are these purposes? One purpose is to indicate what a pupil has learned in social studies and in other curriculum areas. The work samples of what has been achieved in school are produced locally, not by an external examiner. For example, I appraise Ph D these for several universities in India. The theses are air mailed to me. I read them in my home and appraise the contents. I mark what should/could be improved upon and mail the competed evaluation form back to the Controller of Examinations at his/her respective university in India. I have never met the Ph D candidate, nor do I know anything about his/her grade point average. In other words, all I know about the candidate is what is contained inside the written, researched thesis. Therefore, I am completely removed, even in a long distance, from the Ph D candidate. I am an External Examiner, and underline the word external, since I have no other connections with the prospective Ph D candidate.

The pupil's portfolio is developed from products and processes completed or ongoing inside the local classroom. the teacher is local and assists the involved pupil in developing the portfolio. The teacher is very knowledgeable of the pupil and his/her capabilities. What might go into a quality portfolio?

1. written summaries, diary entries, book reports, outlines, and other academic content pertaining to the social studies.
2. poems, stories, plays, formal dramas written, and other

creative products.

3. cassette recordings of oral presentations, participation in reader's theater, and songs sung individually or in a group, as related to the ongoing or completed social studies unit.

4. videotapes involving the quality of participation in committee and collaborative endeavors.

5. snapshots of constructed projects, too large to show in a portfolio.

6. art products such as developing murals, pencil sketching, chalk drawing, water coloring, and potato printing.

The portfolio may become too cumbersome unless items therein are relevant. A listing of items in the portfolio should appear on a separate sheet of paper and placed at the beginning to orientate readers as to the contents. Who should see and appraise the portfolio, beyond that of the pupil and the involved teacher? Parents need to have example opportunities to appraise the contents. A good time to appraise the portfolio for parents is at a parent/teacher conference. Thus, parents have an excellent opportunity to ask question and make comments of their offspring's progress. An atmosphere of respect and caring need to be involved at the conference.

The current rush to develop alternative forms of assessment has been prompted in part by educators' growing disinterest with traditional assessment formats and the uses to which the assessment are made. Advocates of assessment reform question the values of tests that are conducted "post hoc," at the end of the learning cycle, and used only to rank students relative to each other. They also question the value of formats that focus curricular attention on isolated bits of information and the mechanical application of isolated skills.

The alternative is to create assessments that incorporate the kinds of leanings ad activities we want students to experience, and to fashion them so that they can effectively serve formative, as well as summative, assessment purposes...(Murphy,1997).

Portfolio development emphasizes contextual skills and knowledge developed by pupils, not test results from norm and criterion reference tests, developed externally by people removed from the local classroom setting. Portfolio content binds and integrates objectives achieved by pupils in an ongoing unit of study as well as for longer periods of time.

Electronic portfolios will increasingly become common in use in the public schools. With appropriate hardware and software, developers of portfolios may use graphic elements,and visual materials to complete the project.

Developing a teacher's portfolio can be an excellent way of inservice education for the classroom teacher. Among others the

following may be placed into a teacher's portfolio (Ediger, 1997-1998):

1. journal writing and diary entries pertaining to teaching pupils
2. bulletin board ideas, awards, and certificates received
3. daily lesson plans and units developed
4. articles written and anecdotal records of individual pupils
5. description of work experiences and voluntary services performed
6. video taping of one's own classroom teaching
7. snapshots of materials made for teaching
8. self appraisal results and evaluations by peers, principals and supervisors
9. educational meetings and conventions attended
10. recorded conferences with parents and pupils
11. plans developed/implemented for inservice growth
12. membership in professional organizations
13. description of field trips taken by pupils taught
14. workshops taken in computer use as well as in other media utilization
15. use of technology n the classroom
16. correspondence with parents, administrators, and other relevant persons
17. diplomas received and transcripts of additional courses taken
18. management plans of the classroom and case studies made
19. classroom schedules and project methods used in the classroom
20. samples from the pupil's portfolio.

Portfolios might then be made using traditional methods and procedures as well as electronically.

Developing a personal portfolio assists teachers to look inward toward guiding pupil achievement in an optimal manner. The self is then being appraised. Approaches toward improving instruction should be an end result. I have asked many student teachers and cooperating teachers, whom I have supervised in the public schools, covering a thirty year period of time, pertaining to which questions all teachers need to ask about their own teaching for self evaluation purposes. According to these teachers, there are numerous questions that need to be answered pertaining to improving instruction. Among others, the following were stated most frequently:

1. do I select objectives carefully in order to emphasize what is relevant for pupils to learn?
2. are learning opportunities properly aligned with the objectives of instruction?
3. do I provide for individual differences when teaching so that all

may learn as much as possible?

4. is care and concern shown for each pupil's learning and development?
5. are pupils encouraged and guided to become responsible for their own behavior and achievement?
6. do I prepare well for each day of teaching?
7. are appraisal results from pupils used to improve instruction?
8. are my evaluation techniques used valid and reliable?
9. do I work well together with parents and school personnel in providing the best curriculum possible for each pupil?
10. am I actively involved in inservice education to improve instructional procedures?

Pupil Self Appraisal

Pupils should be actively involved in assessing the self to improve achievement, growth, and development. An approach that is feasible to use is for the teacher to discuss with pupils individually and in committees how well each is doing in achieving objectives of instruction in ongoing lessons and units of study. Many of the student teachers and cooperating teachers whom I have supervised in the public schools have raised and discussed the following questions that pupils need to ask of themselves:

1. do I complete my work on time?
2. do I exhibit the best work possible?
3. do I assist others, as possible, when the need arises?
4. do I show respect toward others, including pupils and teachers?
5. do I attach meaning to what is being taught in the classroom?
6. do I participate actively in discussions being held in the classroom?
7. do I accept others as being important in life?
8. do I recognize the talents of others and of myself ?
9. do I show eagerness to learn?
10. do I use appraisal results to improve my very own learning? (Ediger, 1996).

Metacognition and the Pupil

Pupils need to be assisted to monitor their very own achievement continuously. The teacher may do a good job of appraising pupil achievement in ongoing lessons and units of study, but there are still missing ingredients. Those ingredients emphasize pupils individually and intrinsically asking questions about their own understandings and

learnings acquired. The pupil needs to become increasingly independent in learning. This means the learner must assume more and more responsibility to notice what is understood and what needs to be clarified by the teacher or by peers. If pupils are taught to monitor their own achievement, the teacher would have increased feelings of certainty that pupils are "getting it." The pupil needs to do the learning, with the social studies teacher setting the stage for a stimulating environment. A variety of learning opportunities need to be in the offing for pupils to achieve objectives. Why? Individual styles and intelligences need to be provided for in teaching and learning situations. The teacher needs to provide quality learning opportunities in meeting the needs of learners. Pupils then need to become accountable for learning. Goofing off and wasting time does not profit the teacher and definitely not the pupil, individually or collaboratively.

What might the pupil be taught so that metacognition skills are developed?

1. pupils need to think of what has been learned in social studies from today's lesson, as an example. If very little or nothing can be recalled, the pupil needs to ask the self, questions pertaining to "Why did this happen?"
2. when a pupil recalls what has been learned, he/she might perceive gaps in knowledge and skills. This requires the learner to raise one or more questions pertaining to fulfilling the gap(s).
3. when the learner is not clear on how to do a skill, he/she needs to ask for a demonstration or explanation.
4. when a pupil fails to listen carefully and "blanks" in knowledge occur, he/she needs to monitor listening skills more carefully.
5. when the order of knowledge or skills is not perceived clearly, the pupil needs to ask for clarification and then monitor abilities to improve in securing sequential concepts and generalizations.

If the pupil does not raise questions pertaining to what was not understood, the teacher may not know what the pupil missed in learning, unless the latter actually asks questions to indicate those knowledge and skills that need to be retaught.

With metacognition skills, the pupils is involved in monitoring the self. The learner then, consciously, is using different learning strategies and procedures. Higher levels of cognition are needed with an ample knowledge base. To add to the knowledge base, the pupil needs to make careful observations and classify new content accordingly. It takes careful pondering over previously presented and acquisition of ideas. Self evaluation is definitely important in developing metacognition skills due to the individual learner assessing his/her own strategies of learning. Background information possessed by the pupil must be adequate to assimilate new ideas and content being taught. What has

been learned previously is then used to relate to new ideas being achieved. Feedback to the pupil needs to be given frequently so that the pupil may integrate the old with the new knowledge and skills. Knowledge can be used when the learner can use what has been learned and transfer it to a new situation (Jacobson, 1998).

Interest in learning pertaining to the new unit or ongoing lesson needs to be developed so that vital goals may be attained by learners. In writing about the taking of excursions, Ediger (1997, p. 190) wrote the following involving the background idea concept and other facets to facilitate learning and metacognition:

Learners must have adequate background information to benefit from a lifelike leaning activity. Rules of conduct need to be developed prior to the excursion so that pupils individually learn as much as possible. These rules must be understood and adhered to... pupils need to identify problems and find necessary answers. ...Careful planning and implementation are key concepts to emphasize when pupils experience excursions.

Thus, pupils need to have carefully developed standards to live by when learning activities are in the offing so that background information can be developed, reflective thinking emphasized, and metacognition strategies come into being. Metacognition may then be stressed when pupils have achieved leanings. Learners may then reflect upon what has been achieved and also notice what needs to be emphasized again in terms of content and skills. In monitoring their own progress, pupils identify new problems and questions, for which hypotheses and answers are needed.

Conclusion

Diverse approaches should be used to appraise pupil achievement in the social studies. Each approach should attempt to determine what pupils have learned and what is left to be achieved by the learner. Appraisal procedures need to be user friendly in that no individual feels offended, but rather from the results of appraising, plans may be made for teaching and learning situations. Each pupil needs to achieve vital objectives and feel motivated to grow, develop, and achieve in an atmosphere of respect.

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